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Eradication of poverty and other development issues

Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027)

Report of the Secretary-General[1]

Summary

The present report of the Secretary-General is submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to its resolution 72/233. The report, established in cooperation with the United Nations system, presents the response of the United Nations system to the theme of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027), as well as an inter-agency, system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication to coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system. It also contains recommendations for making the Third Decade effective, in support of the poverty eradication-related internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

* A/73/150.

[1] The present document was submitted late owing to a delayed clearance received from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 72/233, the General Assembly proclaimed the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027). It also considered that the theme of the Third Decade, to be reviewed at its seventy-third sessions, should be "Accelerating global actions for a world without poverty", in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The core of the present report consists of an inter-agency, system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication to coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system, as well as recommendations concerning how to make the Third Decade effective.[2]

II. Progress in eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions

2. As the international community embarks on the Third Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, an estimated 783 million people lived on less than $1.90 a day in 2013, compared with 1.867 billion people in 1990. Economic growth across developing countries has been remarkable since 2000, with faster growth in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita than advanced countries. This economic growth has fuelled poverty reduction and improvements in living standards. Achievements have also been recorded in such areas as job creation, gender equality, education and health care, social protection measures, agriculture and rural development, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

3. However, poverty rates are still high in many countries in Africa and the least developed countries. In 2013, of the 783 million people living in extreme poverty, more than half were in sub-Saharan Africa and close to a third lived in Southern Asia. Pockets of poverty also afflict middle- and high-income countries. In 2017, extreme working poverty remained widespread, with more than 300 million workers in emerging and developing countries having a per capita household income or consumption below $1.90 per day. Working poverty is also high and rising in many high-income countries. On average, in 2013, in countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and development (OECD), around 11 per cent of workers lived in poverty, defined as below 50 per cent of median disposable income in each country. The number of those living below the pre-financial crisis poverty threshold increased between 2007 and 2011 across the OECD. There was also a shift in the age profile of poverty, with young people replacing the elderly as the group most at risk of poverty. Poverty rates rose among children, and in particular among young people, but fell among the elderly.[3] Furthermore, 50.3 per cent of people living in poverty are women.[4]

4. Besides income poverty, an estimated 815 million people suffered from hunger in 2016, compared with 777 million in 2015. Of those 815 million people, more than 489 million, or 60 per cent, lived in countries affected by conflict, drought and disasters. Increasing volatility of food prices also contributes to food emergencies. In

[2] For a detailed plan of action, see: www.un.org/esa/socdev/poverty/documents/3UNPovertyDecadeSWAPNarrative.pdf.

[3] Organization for Economic Cooperation and development (OECD), *In It Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All* (Paris, 2015), available at https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/OECD2015-In-It-Together-Chapter1-Overview-Inequality.pdf.

[4] World Bank, "Gender Differences in Poverty and Household Composition through the Life-cycle", Policy Research Working Paper 8360 (March 2018), available at https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29426/WPS8360.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

2016, 26 countries — most in sub-Saharan Africa — experienced high or moderately high levels of general food prices.[5] Furthermore, 844 million people lack basic water services, 4.5 billion lack access to safely managed sanitation and 892 million still practice open defecation. Almost 1 billion people also currently live without electricity, and 3 billion people lack access to clean-cooking solutions and are exposed to dangerous levels of indoor air pollution, which results in about 4 million deaths each year.[6]

5. Moreover, the poorest of the poor are subject to overlapping dimensions of poverty and inequalities. Using the global Multidimensional Poverty Index, 1.46 billion people across 104 countries were classified as poor in 2017. Of those, 689 million were children aged 0–17 years.

III. Response of the United Nations system to accelerating global actions for a world without poverty

6. To eradicate poverty by 2030, given current rates of population growth, it will be necessary to reduce by about 110 million every year the number of people living on less than $1.90 a day.[7] The United Nations system plays an important role in meeting that global challenge. The present section highlights priority areas of the response of the United Nations system as an integral component of global action for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda. While the support of the United Nations system is necessary, it will have the most impact when countries put in place the right integrated policies to fight poverty at the local, national and regional levels, supported by an enabling international environment, as recognized in relevant resolutions adopted by Member States.

A. Capacity-building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda

7. The timely collection and analysis of relevant data are vital for accelerating global actions for a world without poverty. Disaggregated data at the subnational and national levels enable Governments to understand poverty dynamics — in particular to identify the populations experiencing poverty and those at risk of falling back into poverty — in order to leave no one behind. In that regard, the United Nations system has prioritized strengthening national statistical systems to support national plans to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. Capacity development efforts encompass the collection, production, dissemination, analysis and use of quality data and statistics. Efforts also include strengthening institutional capacities of national statistical systems to improve the coverage, quality and frequency of data and statistics.

8. Since the Sustainable Development Goals have the explicit intention of being people-centred and improving lives, they must therefore take account of population dynamics. Knowing how many people are alive, where they live, how old they are and how those variables will change are prerequisites to understanding the characteristics of populations and thus meet their needs.

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[5] See E/2018/64, para. 20.

[6] See United Nations "The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018" (New York, 2018), available at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2018/TheSustainableDevelopmentGoals Report2018-EN.pdf.

[7] World Bank, "Grow, Invest, Insure: a game plan to end extreme poverty by 2030", Policy Research Working Paper 7892 (November 2016), available at http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/924111479240600559/pdf/WPS7892.pdf.

B. Accelerating global actions towards decent work for all

9. Promoting sustainable, inclusive, sustained and equitable economic growth, including a shift towards a greener economy, is crucial in creating the estimated 600 million new jobs that need to be created by 2030 just to keep pace with the growth of the global working-age population. Furthermore, improving conditions for the 780 million working poor is also a priority if those workers are to lift themselves and their families out of $2-a-day poverty.

10. The experiences of successful countries show that the most important driver of poverty eradication is strong economic growth accompanied by increases in decent employment and in labour income, as well as reductions in informal employment. In 16 developing countries with significant reductions in poverty during the past decade, the combined effect of growth in employment and labour incomes accounted for more than 50 per cent of the poverty reduction.[8] Hence, creating decent jobs is one of the critical global actions that needs to be accelerated over the course of the Third Decade, in particular for young women and men. National policies should foster labour intensive growth in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing and infrastructure development.

C. Promoting structural transformation through industrialization

11. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that accelerating inclusive and sustainable development through structural transformation can be a key driver of sustainable economic growth, job creation and poverty eradication, in particular in low-income, developing countries. Regions and countries that have successfully transformed their economies through industrialization have been able to significantly reduce poverty, especially when economic growth was both rapid and labour-intensive. Between 1990 and 2013, East Asian countries that had focused on industrialization were able to reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty from about 1 billion to 71 million.[9]

12. According to the 2030 Agenda, it is critical to support countries overcome such challenges as a lack of industrial capacity or technology and low productivity, and to attract investment. Furthermore, such global action requires assisting countries in developing and financing industrial infrastructure, such as industrial parks, transportation and trade logistics, and in developing policies, strategies and institutional and regulatory frameworks that facilitate market access, attract foreign direct investment, facilitate technology transfers and ensure environmental sustainability.

D. Supporting the rural farm and non-farm economy

13. The 2030 Agenda depends crucially on the transformation of rural areas, where most of the poor and hungry live. Two thirds of the extreme poor live in rural areas and depend on agriculture, fishing or forest resources for their livelihoods. Most of the people living in poverty have less access to: (a) productive resources; (b) basic services, such as health, education and social protection; (c) basic infrastructure, such as roads, water and electricity; and (d) off-farm employment. Furthermore, rural

[8] World Bank, "Is Labor Income Responsible for Poverty Reduction?", Policy Research Working Paper 6414 (April 2013), available at https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/15552/wps6414.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

[9] H. Haraguchi and K. Kitaoka, "Industrialization in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Development", in *Development*, vol. 58, iss. 4, pp. 452–462.

women and girls fare far worse on most development indicators and are more likely to be malnourished in all forms and more vulnerable to climate change.

14. One key area for action is therefore the support of the United Nations system to help many developing countries to foster rapid agricultural productivity growth and rural development. Investing in agriculture and related rural off-farm activities can foster inclusive economic growth. Key support to agriculture and rural development includes improving access to credit and markets, facilitating farm mechanization, revitalizing agricultural extension systems, strengthening land tenure rights, ensuring equity in supply contracts, strengthening small-scale producer organizations and, in particular, the formulation and implementation of gender-sensitive agricultural and rural development policies.

E. Enhancing national productive capacities for job growth and poverty eradication

15. In order to break the cycle of poverty and underdevelopment, it is necessary to identify those sectors with potential for both an immediate payoff in terms of job creation and the possibility of sustainable long-term growth. However, Governments, especially those in low-income countries, have limited resources and often lack the necessary abilities and thus need to prioritize productive capacity-enhancing policies to achieve sustained economic growth and long-term transformation and realize broader national development goals. Building productive capacities and achieving structural transformation consists of shifting resources and policy focus from traditional sectors and activities with low productivity and low technology, to new sectors and activities characterized by higher productivity and more sophisticated technology.

16. Many countries — in particular African countries, least developed countries and other vulnerable countries — are characterized by structurally weak economies with limited productive capacities that constrain their ability to produce efficiently. Building a critical mass of viable and competitive productive capacity in agriculture, manufacturing and services is therefore essential if those countries are to benefit from greater integration into the global economy, increase resilience to shocks, sustain inclusive and equitable growth and poverty eradication, achieve structural transformation and generate full and productive employment.

F. Implementing social protection floors based on national priorities

17. Despite the key role that social protection systems play in preventing and reducing poverty, vulnerability, inequality and social exclusion, the proportion of the population covered by social protection systems and floors remains low. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), only 45.2 per cent of the world's population is covered by at least one social protection benefit, while 29 per cent enjoy comprehensive social protection. That means that 55 per cent, or 4 billion people, have no social protection at all.

18. Huge regional differences also persist. Over 80 per cent of the population living in Africa has no social protection, compared with 16 per cent in Europe and Central Asia, 61 per cent in Asia and the Pacific and 32 per cent in the Americas. Significant coverage differences also exist across social groups. Only 41.1 per cent of mothers with newborns receive a maternity benefit, while 83 million new mothers remain uncovered. In total, 68 per cent of older persons receive old-age pensions worldwide, while only 35 per cent of children and 28 per cent of persons with disabilities are

protected.[10] Increasing coverage is therefore a global priority. The cost of providing the full set of benefits for the 57 low-income and lower-middle-income countries ranges from 0.3 to 9.8 per cent of GDP — with an average cost of 4.2 per cent of GDP.

G. Leveraging innovation and interconnectivity for employment creation and poverty eradication

19. The accelerating pace of innovation and interconnectivity will have an important impact on human progress and development, with the potential to contribute both to productivity growth and incomes, as well as to financial inclusion, health, education and the environment. However, given that technological change is often labour-saving, there are also growing concerns that technological innovation may lead to increased unemployment, suppressed wages and greater inequality. The United Nations system can help countries to formulate the right policy mix and institutional arrangements that can ensure that the benefits of innovation are shared broadly and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.[11]

20. To better support Member States in the area of "frontier issues", the Secretary-General has called upon United Nations research and operational bodies to engage broadly with new technologies so that their benefits can be applied to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and their risks can be mitigated. Through its normative and analytical work, the United Nations system is also focusing on how the new wave of technologies will shape labour markets and income distribution, and on the role of institutions and policies in place at the national and global levels. Attention is being paid on how the most vulnerable are affected by and can benefit from rapid technological developments and interconnectivity.

H. Investing in education, skills development and employment facilitation

21. Successful poverty eradication strategies focus on the expansion of education and of productive sectors. The expansion and transformation of productive sectors addresses the scarcity of decent jobs while the expansion of education ensures that there is a large enough educated labour force to meet the needs of those jobs. Hence, global actions to eradicate poverty should go hand in hand with education and skills development policies, with a strong focus on providing comprehensive primary through tertiary education for all. The progressive improvement of a skilled workforce is a closely-related feature of decent work for sustainable development, which in turn requires education and training systems that offer lifelong learning to the entire population. In that regard, the United Nations system is already working with Member States to ensure that every child receives a quality education that equips him or her for life. Priority is also being given to equipping young people with the skills needed for a rapidly changing labour market as well as opportunities for continued learning and vocational resources.

22. Through the Incheon Declaration, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is leading and coordinating the Education 2030 Agenda and Framework for Action, with its partners providing support through

[10] ILO, "World Social Protection Report", available at www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_605078.pdf.

[11] Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "The impact of the technological revolution on labour markets and income distribution" (31 July 2017), available at www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/2017_Aug_Frontier-Issues-1.pdf.

coordinated policy advice, technical assistance, capacity development and monitoring of progress at the global, regional and national levels.

I. Promoting universal health coverage, equitable access to quality health services

23. Good health is essential for sustained economic and social development and for poverty reduction. This requires universal health coverage, underpinned by a strong health system, that protects people from being pushed into poverty owing of the costs of health care. It is an investment to be nurtured, and the return on investment is compelling. About one quarter of full-income economic growth between 2000 and 2011 in low- and middle-income countries is estimated to be attributable to improvements in health. The health sector is also a growing source of jobs. Among OECD countries, employment in the health and social sectors grew by 48 per cent between 2000 and 2014, while jobs in industry and agriculture declined. Moreover, as 70 per cent of the global health workforce is female, creating jobs in the health sector is an investment in women's empowerment and gender equality. Furthermore, investments in strong, resilient health systems safeguard against health emergencies that can potentially have catastrophic social and economic consequences. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates show that, in 67 low- and middle-income countries, 85 per cent of the costs of reaching the health-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals can be met with domestic resources, although 32 of the world's poorest countries will face significant resource gaps and will continue to need external assistance. Universal health coverage has therefore become a major goal for health reform in many countries and a priority objective of WHO and the United Nations.

J. Promoting durable solutions for and inclusion of displaced populations

24. Efforts to eradicate poverty should include promoting durable solutions for and inclusion of displaced populations. Globally, about 68.5 million people were forcibly displaced in 2017 due to conflict, persecution and violence.[12] The individual and collective cost of displacement is significant. Around 1.5 million refugee children are missing out on education, and 2 million refugee adolescents are not in secondary school.[13] Conflicts and their devastating impact on inclusive development and poverty eradication primarily affect developing countries. Low- and middle-income countries shoulder the responsibility of hosting refugees and displaced populations, placing significant stress on limited national fiscal space. At the individual level, refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees and stateless persons are invisible and hence not included in national development programmes and plans. Those groups also face legal barriers to gainful employment and have limited access to essential services.

25. In response, the United Nations system promotes voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration as part of durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons. Efforts are also being made to include those groups in national development plans.

[12] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Global trends: Forced displacement in 2017" (Geneva 2018), available at www.unhcr.org/5b27be547.pdf.

[13] www.unhcr.org/59b696f44.pdf.

K. Accelerating actions to combat climate change and its impact

26. Frequent and severe climate change-induced threats and disasters, such as droughts, floods, rising sea levels and other extreme weather events, are increasingly undermining the attainment of the 2030 Agenda.[14] In 2017, weather-related disasters caused some $320 billion in economic damage, making the year the costliest ever for such losses.[15] The 2017 Atlantic hurricane season had a devastating social and economic impact, with decades of development set back. Similarly, monsoon floods affected 41 million people in South Asia in 2017, while nearly 900,000 people were affected by severe droughts in Africa.[16] Such disasters have a disproportionate impact on people living in poverty, especially those who rely on climate-sensitive activities, and affect women differently and disproportionately compared with men. Hence, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda have prioritized climate change mitigation and adaptation as critical elements for eradicating poverty. The United Nations system is at the forefront, pushing the implementation of the Paris Agreement as an integral part of its support to the Sustainable Development Goals. United Nations entities are working to increase the resilience of developing countries against the impacts of climate change.

L. Partnerships and resource mobilization for development

27. Partnerships and financing are critical for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations has prioritized building the capacity of Member States to mobilize domestic resources, with an emphasis on tax reform, good governance and creating an enabling environment for investment and entrepreneurship.[17] Providing a conducive environment for efficient private-sector participation in the economy is critical. Long-standing commitments to official development assistance (ODA) are also an important source of income for many least developed countries. In 2017, ODA amounted $146.6 billion, representing a decrease of 0.6 per cent from 2016, partly due to less money being spent hosting and processing refugees within donor countries.[18] To scale-up poverty eradication efforts, ODA levels should be maintained or raised while debt relief efforts should be intensified. Deliberate efforts must also be made to encourage foreign direct investment in sectors such as manufacturing and activities that boost inclusive growth and employment creation. Greater efforts are also required to combat illicit financial flows, tax evasion and money-laundering.

IV. A system-wide plan of action for the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027)

28. The present section presents an inter-agency, system-wide plan of action to coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system.

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[14] https://unfccc.int/news/last-three-years-were-hottest-on-record-wmo.

[15] https://unfccc.int/news/damage-from-natural-disasters-almost-doubled-in-2017-compared-to-2016.

[16] https://unfccc.int/news/climate-chaos-to-continue-in-2018-un-secretary-general-warns.

[17] United Nations, *Financing for Development: Progress and Prospects 2018. Report of the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development* (New York, 2018), available at https://developmentfinance.un.org/sites/developmentfinance.un.org/files/Report_IATF_2018.pdf.

[18] www.oecd.org/development/development-aid-stable-in-2017-with-more-sent-to-poorest-countries.htm.

A. Objectives

29. Although national policies are the primary means by which Member States address the scale and complexity of the challenge of eradicating poverty in all its forms everywhere, the United Nations system can provide important support to national authorities and civil society. Furthermore, by encouraging collective action on a global scale, a multiplier effect can accelerate progress towards poverty eradication in all countries. Given the range of poverty-focused actions already under way or planned by entities of the United Nations system, including as part of the integrated follow up to the 2030 Agenda, it is vital that the objectives of a system-wide plan for the Third Decade be carefully specified in terms of means of action as well as outcomes to maximize effectiveness and avoid duplication.

30. The plan of action for the Third Decade focuses on issues on which strengthened operational and policy integration by the United Nations system could yield improved support to Member States priorities and capacity to pursue institutional and policy coherence. In that regard, a focus is proposed on promoting collaboration across the United Nations system on policy issues where an integrated approach has most salience and that addresses key issues in transforming development processes. Experience with existing system-wide plans of action can inform the identification of key objectives and core principles for collaborative interagency action.

31. An overarching theme is the building of policy frameworks that accelerate investment in sustained poverty-reducing inclusive growth, through the transformation from low- to higher-productivity work. However, new issues will emerge over the course of the Decade and individual Member States may request integrated system-wide support on different topics reflecting their priorities.

32. As stressed repeatedly in the 2030 Agenda, transforming current growth paths is a necessary condition for achieving poverty eradication and all the other Sustainable Development Goals. Such transformation requires coherent and integrated policy frameworks nationally and internationally. The main operational objective of the system-wide plan of action for accelerating global actions for a world without poverty is to promote integrated programmes by the United Nations system that support Member States in moving development trajectories onto a sustained and sustainable path of poverty reducing growth. Such programmes make it possible to combine the different fields of expertise of the United Nations organizations so that the impact is multiplied. An example is the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, in which 23 United Nations organizations led by ILO formed a platform to catalyse partnerships, collaboration and coordination action grounded in evidence-based research.[19]

B. Setting the framework for integrated system-wide action to accelerate poverty eradication

1. Principles

33. The plan of action is founded on 10 basic principles that will guide the work of the United Nations system collectively and the individual contributions of system entities:

(a) Poverty is multi-dimensional in the forms it takes and its underlying causes, and new forms are emerging;

[19] www.decentjobsforyouth.org/.

(b) Integrated economic, social and environmental policies are needed nationally and internationally;

(c) Sustained and inclusive economic growth that narrows inequalities is necessary and entails structural transformation to generate full and productive employment and decent work for all;

(d) Respect for internationally recognized human rights is an essential foundation for action;

(e) Gender mainstreaming is vital for policy design and implementation;

(f) Discrimination, marginalization and exclusion are major causes of poverty and the barriers to the full participation in society and the economy of poor people and people in vulnerable situations, and must be removed;

(g) Inclusion and empowerment of those left behind is a priority, targeting those furthest behind;

(h) The role of the United Nations is to support nationally owned strategies and strengthen capacities for the realization of internationally agreed development goals and targets, including the Sustainable Development Goals, based on high-quality research and the promotion of good governance, human rights and the rule of law;

(i) The United Nations development system organizations will bring together their special expertise and policy portfolios to focus on integrated system-wide action that enhances efficiency, coherence, impact and adaptability to emerging trends;

(j) Inclusive and strategic partnerships based on these principles will pull together resources and deliver action globally, regionally, nationally and locally.

2. Means of action

34. In designing the plan of action, important lessons were drawn from past experience of policy integration and emerging plans, including the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to strengthen the means of action of the United Nations system. These include:

(a) **Joint research**. Evidence of the linkages between levels of educational attainment, health status and participation in productive employment can inform integrated strategies for health care, education and the transition from school to work. Similarly, studies of the poverty-reducing potential of "green jobs" can provide a solid basis for a shift towards environmentally sustainable development;

(b) **Monitoring and reporting on the indicators for poverty eradication-related Goals**. The plan of action will help Member States to monitor progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals;

(c) **Dissemination of information**. A system portal to gain access to information on research and integrated poverty eradication programmes and their impact will help Member States and United Nations organizations to realize more fully the potential of collaboration across policy fields. Organizations will also be encouraged to similarly establish a poverty eradication webpage on their own websites to group together information on their activities in support of the Third Decade;

(d) **Promoting integrated programmes**. In addition to promoting existing integrated programmes, the plan will build on research and experience to facilitate the identification of the scope for further integrated programmes and their development;

(e) **System focal points**. Nomination by each organization of a focal point to collaborate with counterparts on the implementation of the plan. This team of system focal points will be coordinated by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs;

(f) **Capacity-building**. Improved training on integrated policymaking and implementation for national officials and United Nations staff;

(g) **Incentivizing planning for integrated programmes**. The plan of action will incentivize collaborative work by entities of the United Nations system to implement integrated programmes.

3. Areas of policy focus

35. The plan of action has seven thematic policy areas that focus on actions that drive the structural transformations essential to sustained, inclusive and poverty-reducing growth.

(a) Structural transformation, productive employment and decent work in the context of a changing global scenario

36. Productive employment and decent work remains the basic and sustainable route out of poverty for individuals, communities and societies. Full and productive employment generates greater consumption and saving, which drive investment and thus sustained growth. Rising incomes enables the tax base to be enlarged so that public investments in human capacity and in the social and physical infrastructure, including in greening the economy, can be financed. However, underemployment, unemployment, informal work, poor-quality employment, vulnerable employment and working poverty remain major concerns in emerging and developing countries, dampening efforts to achieve poverty eradication.[20]

37. Profound changes in the world of work are being brought about by a wave of innovation in digital technologies, artificial intelligence and robotics which, coupled with the impact of demographic change and continuing globalization, are altering patterns of growth and development. The new wave of innovations has the potential to create new and better opportunities for employment. However, the gains from productivity growth are anticipated to be unequally distributed, with unskilled workers and groups on the margins of the labour market, such as women, least likely to benefit unless inclusive employment policies are strengthened. Hence, it is imperative for the United Nations system to support countries in preparing for these future realities through the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and by supporting public policies that foster societal learning and transformative structural changes. There is scope for the United Nations system to assist countries in facilitating the transition of workers from old to new jobs and share productivity gains from technological change equitably. The United Nations system should continue to advocate for greater functional and substantive policy coherence and an integrated approach to the promotion of decent work for all.

38. Within that overall picture of profound changes in the world of work, with mixed effects on the goal of poverty eradication, various entities of the United Nations system are contributing. The main means of action are research, advisory services, technical support and capacity-building based on knowledge products, international labour standards and other human rights instruments.

[20] ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2018* (Geneva, 2018), available at www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_615594.pdf.

39. The plan of action will promote and support the integration of decent work and poverty eradication into national and international policies, strategies and programmes. It is essential for there to be a particular focus on those who risk being left behind, by implementing measures to formalize employment, introduce or strengthen minimum wages, guarantee respect for freedom of association and collective bargaining rights, combat all forms of discrimination in employment and end child and forced labour, including in agriculture and rural areas. Such measures will also help countries to harness the potential and mitigate the challenges of emerging technologies, and also to mitigate the challenges that the transition to low-carbon economies presents for employment, wage and income distribution, worker protections and social protection systems. The Partnership for Action on the Green Economy[21] and the Poverty-Environment Initiative[22] can offer valuable integrated support in this field.

40. The plan of action will aim to enhance national capacities to develop and implement strategies that give young women and men everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work. The Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth is a system-wide partnership for the promotion of youth employment.[23] It will also help to build the productive capacity and decent work opportunities needed for economic transformation and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals through the design and implementation of sectoral policies. The recently established "Working for Health" programme of WHO, ILO and OECD to accelerate progress towards universal health coverage, global health security and the 2030 Agenda through the expansion and transformation of the global health and social workforce is an important integrated programme in a key sector for poverty eradication.[24]

41. The plan of action will design and implement rural development and agricultural, fisheries and forestry policies that promote job creation in farm and off-farm sectors. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and ILO are active on those issues and have a long-standing cooperation agreement. The plan will also strengthen economic policies, including on trade, that lead to inclusive and sustainable industrialization for decent employment creation and poverty reduction. Furthermore, the plan will assess the linkages between demographic and economic changes, including the effects on labour markets and social protection systems.

(b) Expanding social protection systems to underpin inclusive, poverty-reducing development

42. Social protection systems are fundamental not only to lifting people out of poverty, but also in preventing them from falling back into poverty. They are a potent tool for the reduction of vulnerabilities across the life cycle, narrowing inequalities and fostering inclusive growth. Social protection is fundamental to the full attainment of economic and social rights for all, as recognized in a series of international legal instrument and ILO conventions and recommendations.

43. Social protection policies and programmes are especially critical for meeting the challenges posed by demographic changes. As the number of older persons continues to grow in many countries around the world, the need to guarantee their well-being and income security is increasingly urgent. Social protection systems also need to be expanded to ensure the protection of incomes and to facilitate access to health, education and decent employment, including for those in precarious and

[21] www.un-page.org/home.

[22] www.unpei.org/.

[23] www.decentjobsforyouth.org/.

[24] www.who.int/hrh/com-heeg/action-plan-annexes/en/.

informal employment. The contribution of social protection to gender equality is vital. Along with the provision of public care services and infrastructure, social protection systems can play a major role in redistributing care responsibilities and recognizing and valuing unpaid work.

44. Several United Nations organizations will work together to expand social protection systems and underpin sustainable poverty-eradicating development. An important vehicle for joint work is the United Nations-wide Social Protection Floor Initiative supported by the Joint Fund Window for Social Protection Floors.[25] Other cooperation platforms include: (a) the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board, which promotes inter-agency coordination and advocacy on social protection issues, including in response to country demand-driven actions;[26] and (b) the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection.[27] The main means of action are technical support, policy research, advice and advocacy, capacity development and training and expert meetings.

45. Action will focus on providing support to countries in implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, with the aim of achieving by 2030 substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable. Within that field, the main focus is on those at risk of being left behind, including the rural poor, persons with disabilities and women workers in informal employment, who are typically low-paid and face low-quality jobs, widespread casualization and poor working conditions and lack a collective voice and agency as organized workers. Joint analytical work on building the economic case for scaling up social protection is envisaged. In that regard, the promotion of increased coherence between social protection and broad poverty reduction and development strategies will receive particular attention, for example, through agriculture and nutrition policies. Strengthening integrated social protection systems along the life cycle to meet the needs of older people and provide assistance to families that care for older family members is becoming an urgent issue in many countries.

(c) Human capability development: addressing non-income forms of poverty

46. Ending poverty is not just about people's income but also their access to basic needs, such as quality education and health care, clean water and sanitation, decent housing and security. Improved education and health will accelerate the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals. Breaking the vicious cycle of poor or no schooling, ill health and poverty-level incomes is essential for sustainable development. Eradicating income poverty also plays a critical role in improving health as poor people face substantial financial barriers to gaining access to the health services they need, and often face other cultural and social barriers when they do receive those services. In turn, good health plays a critical role in reducing poverty as it increases an individual's labour productivity, level of educational attainment and income. Similarly, improved education enables people to live healthier lives and learn new skills over their working life and thus earn higher incomes.

47. The overarching objective regarding non-income dimensions of poverty is to promote integrated approaches and policy frameworks to address multidimensional poverty. Several United Nations development system organizations have specialized mandates that address non-income dimensions of eradicating poverty. In addition, several partnership programmes are also available to support Member States. The International Health Partnership for Universal Health Coverage provides a

[25] www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/ShowProject.action?id=2767.

[26] www.ilo.org/newyork/issues-at-work/social-protection/social-protection-inter-agency-cooperation-board/lang--en/index.htm.

[27] www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/NewYork.action?id=34.

multi-stakeholder platform to promote collaborative working in countries and globally on health systems strengthening. The plan of action advocates for increased political commitment to universal health coverage and facilitates knowledge sharing.[28] Education 2030, led by UNESCO, also involves seven other United Nations bodies as well as many other civil society and intergovernmental organizations.[29] Its aim is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all through the implementation of Goal 4, on inclusive and equitable quality education. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), WHO and the World Bank Group have formed the "H6 partnership" to support the implementation of "Every Woman, Every Child", the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health 2016–2030, and reach the targets of the health-related Sustainable Development Goals.[30] The role of UN-Water is that of coordinator, to ensure the United Nations family "delivers as one" in response to water related challenges.[31]

(d) The future of food and sustainable agriculture

48. Sustainable agriculture plays a crucial role in ending poverty and achievement of almost all of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda depends on the transformation of agriculture and rural areas, where most of the poor and hungry live. Since the 1990s, rural transformations have lifted more than 750 million rural people above the poverty line, but progress has been uneven.

49. Developments in agriculture have led to major improvements in productivity and to the ability to satisfy the demands of a growing global population, but this has not resulted in food and income security for all. In many countries, food production will still need to increase sharply to keep pace with an expanding population. To make rural transformation inclusive and make sure no one is left behind, the world will need to leverage the enormous untapped potential of food systems to drive agro-industrial development, boost small-scale farmers' productivity and incomes and create off-farm employment in expanding segments of food supply and value chains. National development strategies need to invest in people, especially the rural poor, who will be at the centre of the transition to sustainable agriculture and food systems.

50. Three major factors will influence whether rural transformation will be inclusive. First is the growing and changing demand from urban food markets, which consume up to 70 per cent of the food supply, even in countries with large rural populations. Second, in the coming years, many small-scale farmers are likely to leave agriculture, and most will be unable to find decent employment in largely low-productivity rural economies. Third, the physical, socioeconomic and political connections between small urban centres and their surrounding rural areas must be strengthened. Small cities and towns create greater opportunities for smallholder farmers to market their produce and serve as hubs for the expansion of the services sector.

51. This theme aims to enhance the capacity of countries to implement integrated programmes for inclusive rural development to overcome the challenges in eradicating extreme poverty and ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition. The plan of action will focus on those most at risk of being left behind by rural

[28] www.uhc2030.org.

[29] https://en.unesco.org/education2030-sdg4.

[30] www.everywomaneverychild.org/about/ewec-ecosystem/#sect6.

[31] www.unwater.org/.

transformation, for example, women and other marginalized populations, including indigenous persons.

52. Various entities of the United Nations system offer technical support and policy advice, capacity-building, research and analysis and advocacy. Partnerships with small farmer and rural workers' organizations and local authorities is a feature of action on integrated rural development by the United Nations system.

(e) Reducing inequalities

53. Inequality takes multiple forms and acts as a formidable barrier to poverty eradication and sustainable development. The negative impact of inequality, including gender inequality, on poverty emphasizes the importance of structural transformation that leads to inclusive and sustainable industrialization for employment creation and poverty reduction. Poverty reduction, especially to reach the furthest behind first, requires equality-oriented policies. Inequalities include, but transcend, income inequality and originate from the uneven exercise of rights, unequal access to opportunities and capacity development and thus unequal results. Promoting greater equality not only helps to safeguard the economic, social and cultural rights of all women and men, girls and boys, but also fosters growth, development and greater social cohesion. The 2030 Agenda reflects a consensus on the need to move towards more egalitarian, cohesive and solidarity-based societies and inclusive economic growth.

54. The plan of action will combat the multiple and intersecting manifestations of inequality, such as socio-economic status, gender, territory, ethnicity/race, age, disability status and life cycle, as they relate to access to education, health, economic resources (including land), social protection, employment, cultural life, participation in decision-making at all levels (household, community and national) and other dimensions considered relevant in the national context. It will further the analysis of the multiple dimensions of inequality and its linkages with the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development as well as the linkages between income inequality, poverty and economic growth. One particular area of focus is enhancing women's economic empowerment, in particular rural women. Reducing inequities in access to health services and in health status, as well as access to education, is also key.

55. Various entities of the United Nations system plan to be active on this theme. One important means of combating inequalities is to introduce integrated, inclusive approaches on issues such as health, education and rural development, for example by using gender analysis or policy dialogue with civil society groups. Research on the causes of different forms of inequality and the impact of policies aimed at reducing inequalities is vital to the development of impactful programmes.

(f) Addressing climate change and the intensification of natural hazards

56. Climate change and natural hazards can be enormously costly — both economic and in terms of human lives — on sustainable development and risk, and they exacerbate many dimensions of poverty and inequality. These challenges need to be addressed through measures of mitigation and prevention to tackle climate change and natural hazards directly. It is essential to ensure that climate change does not significantly set back poverty eradication, in particular through its impact on households with natural resource-based livelihoods, women, children, young people and other vulnerable and marginalized groups. Measures of mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction can also contribute significantly to poverty eradication. It is therefore important to integrate climate change mitigation and adaption and disaster risk reduction across United Nations system efforts in support of the poverty

eradication-related internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals, and climate justice.

57. Under this theme, United Nations organizations will aim to strengthen the capacity of countries to build resilience to protracted crises, disasters and extreme climate events. They will enable the development and support the implementation of integrated policy approaches, including social protection, to mitigate and adapt to climate change at the national and international levels. A key issue for action is the reduction of the exposure and vulnerability to disasters of poor people, especially those who live in rural areas and depend on natural resources.

58. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), WHO, ILO, FAO, the World Food Programme (WFP), UN-Women, UNESCO and the regional commissions are collaborating on this theme, offering research and analysis, policy advice, technical support, capacity-building and training. The promotion of coherence between poverty eradication and climate change policies is a major focus of this work, making full use of the UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Action Initiative.[32]

(g) Fighting poverty in fragile and humanitarian contexts

59. The 2030 Agenda commits countries to building the resilience of people living in poverty and those in vulnerable situations and reducing their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters. Such shocks not only provoke immediate humanitarian needs for food, shelter and medical care, but also can severely set back poverty eradication in the longer term, not least by increasing all aspects of fragility and preventing access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food at all times of the year for all. Ending poverty and hunger in countries in special situations and in protracted crisis presents specific challenges that need to be addressed, related to insufficient or degraded natural resources, as well as logistics hurdles to ensure access to food and conflict. Integrated, nationally driven and country-specific policies and programmes supported by inclusive, multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms, partnerships and international cooperation are critically important.

60. An overarching objective of action in many humanitarian contexts is to address the root causes of fragility, conflict and social and economic instability by promoting policy and practical solutions, investing in the human potential of vulnerable and marginalized people by upgrading their skills and through the transfer of knowledge and technologies, thereby creating stable employment and income opportunities. A key issue for fighting poverty in crisis situations is providing support to internally displaced persons and refugees to secure better access to livelihood opportunities, finance, adequate housing with security of tenure and basic services, including social assistance. It is equally important to support host communities by strengthening income-generating opportunities and risk management interventions, including through social protection and in a gender responsive manner. The plan of action on this theme will aim to strengthen the capacity of countries to prevent, prepare for and respond to the immediate needs of crisis-affected populations for food, health care, shelter and jobs.

61. The United Nations organizations that contribute to tackling poverty in fragile and humanitarian contexts include WFP, FAO, WHO, UNICEF, ILO, UN Habitat, UNDP, UNESCO and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. A key cooperation body is the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which serves as the

[32] www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/global-policy-centres/sustainable_landmanagement/pei.html.

primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination relating to humanitarian assistance in response to complex and major emergencies.[33] Actions during the Third Decade will focus on building capacity to prevent or mitigate crisis situations and the damage they do to poverty eradication, through policy advice, training and research.

4. Modalities of delivery: building momentum, tracking progress, learning lessons, identifying emerging issues and adapting actions

62. Eradicating poverty in all its manifestations and achieving all the ambitious targets of the 2030 Agenda will require a major global drive by multi-actor coalitions, alliances and partnerships to set in motion the necessary economic, social and environmental transformations. The Decade should therefore be a 10-year rolling campaign by the United Nations system to demonstrate that, despite the daunting scale of the challenge of ending poverty, an inclusive, fair and sustainable future is possible through determined collective action by Member States, with the support of the United Nations development system. Every 17 October, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty provides a focus for the campaign.

63. A central feature of system-wide action is therefore a strategy that enables the rich knowledge and expertise dispersed around the United Nations system to be brought together and focused on practical, integrated policies to support similarly coherent efforts by Member States. An impressive amount of information on poverty in all its forms and the policies to attack it is already available on the websites of United Nations organizations. A portal at the United Nations system level will help Member States, the United Nations system itself and the public at large to navigate access to this invaluable resource and promote integrated system-wide programmes. The portal will also help to identify further scope for integrated action by the United Nations system in successive programming cycles to 2027.

64. Strengthening the capacity of countries for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda will require timely, systematic, appropriate and high-quality statistical information. Many countries report significant limitations in producing relevant, accurate and comparable disaggregated data. Building on the United Nations-wide effort to improve data sources as part of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the plan of action will therefore work to strengthen national statistical capacity and monitoring systems to ensure the availability of multidimensional data on poverty. The goal is to have data that is high quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant to national contexts.

65. The plan of action will make full use of the indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals to track progress on the eradication of poverty in all its forms everywhere. A progress report on the plan of action based on an analysis of the trends revealed by the poverty-related indicators will be prepared every two years.

66. The plan of action will also promote joint research and analysis by United Nations organizations on the linkages between different forms of poverty. Such research will make it possible to identify the emerging issues in poverty eradication, such as the impact of technological change on development patterns and appropriate policy responses.

67. Policy-oriented research will aim to support the capacity of Member States to develop and implement integrated strategies for poverty eradication, not least in budget planning mechanisms and programme design.

[33] https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/.

68. Integrated policymaking and implementation will require officials of the United Nations and its Member States to enhance their skills. The plan of action will therefore work with United Nations training institutions to develop training modules for incorporation into staff development programmes.

69. United Nations organizations will nominate focal points for the Decade to serve on an online consultation forum facilitated by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to manage activities under the Decade. Every two years, the content of the plan of action will be reviewed to assess the learn lessons and, if needed, adapt the means of action and themes of policy focus to the emerging trends and changing priorities.

70. The General Assembly is invited to review and offer guidance on this outline of the system-wide plan of action on accelerating global actions for a world without poverty for the Third Decade.

V. Recommendations on making the Third Decade effective

71. **To ensure that the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027) provides an effective framework for promoting and supporting poverty eradication efforts, Member States may wish to consider the following recommendations that can be taken at the global, regional and national levels:**

(a) **The General Assembly, as the only global body that can speak with a global voice to all stakeholders on the overarching objective of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, should dedicate an agenda item to the eradication of poverty framed within the context of the Third Decade, to help foster global dialogue, to provide a platform for global stocktaking, to track and evaluate progress, to draw lessons from successful actions and to identify those who need greater attention. Effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for national plans are essential to ensuring that policies have the desired impact;**

(b) **At the global level, the United Nations system should make the Third Decade effective through the advocacy and implementation mechanisms of the Sustainable Development Goals, including the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the system-wide plan of action for the eradication of poverty;**[34]

(c) **At the regional level, the United Nations system should build on and strengthen existing regional coordination through the regional commissions and other regional mechanisms, enhance regional cooperation and harmonize the 2030 Agenda with regional and subregional development frameworks that have already been adopted;**

(d) **At the national level, the United Nations system can make the Third Decade effective through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. Its support to countries to address poverty should be enhanced by improving the quality of policy research and knowledge products; improving the quality of technical assistance and strengthening national capacities; and the continued strengthening of its capacity to provide relevant and effective national policy advice on promoting integrated strategies for poverty eradication, including the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into national plans and governance structures and prioritization and sequencing of actions;**

[34] United Nations Development Group, "Fulfilling the promises: a practical guide for UN advocacy to promote implementation of the 2030 agenda" (2017).

(e) **Relevant organizations of the United Nations should implement the objectives of the Decade through advisory and programmatic support to Member States. Within the framework of the plan of action, the United Nations system should promote the sharing of experiences and peer learning among countries and showcase innovative approaches and strategies in different regional and national circumstances. It should also address new and emerging issues that undermine poverty eradication efforts;**

(f) **Member States and their development partners should continue to build the political will and high-level advocacy necessary for the formulation, financing and implementation of national policies that boost inclusive growth, expand opportunities and social protection coverage to all segments of society and protect the planet;**

(g) **Gender perspectives should be mainstreamed across efforts to eradicate poverty and support and enhance the participation of young women and men and other underrepresented groups in national development activities;**

(h) **The relevant entities of the United Nations development system should implement joint programming at the country and local levels to promote system-wide coherence and harmonization and reduce duplication and fragmentation;**

(i) **Member States should deepen genuine, inclusive and meaningful partnerships and cooperation with civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and philanthropic organizations to contribute to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.**